Introduction: Voulez ouyr?

Tom Hamilton

Durham University

tom.b.hamilton@durham.ac.uk

Nicholas Hammond

University of Cambridge

ngh20@cam.ac.uk

'Voulez ouyr les cris de Paris ?' Clément Janequin's polyphonic composition encourages its audiences to experience the soundscape of sixteenth-century Paris.

> Aigre, vin aigre !
> Fault il point de saultce vert ?
> Moustarde, moustarde fine !
> Harenc blanc, harenc de la nuyt ![1]

The text and performance of Janequin's work raises important issues about the representations of social classes in literature and the performance of everyday speech in a choral context. It introduces the voices of Parisian street singers in ways that seem immediately realistic – vinegar, green sauce, mustard, herring – yet also draw attention to their literary construction as ultimately the song exposes the impossibility of its own project: 'Si vous en voulez plus ouyr, allez les donc querre !'[2]

[1] Ensemble Clément Janequin, *Les Cris de Paris: chansons de Janequin & Sermisy* (Arles: Harmonia Mundi France, 2005).
[2] Cf. U. McIlvenna, 'Chanteurs de Rue, or Street Singers in Early Modern Paris', *Renaissance Studies*, 33 (2019), 65.

In a sixteenth-century context, the joke is perhaps on the elite audiences who would hear Janequin's pieces performed at court yet would not deign to expose themselves on foot to the hawkers on the Petit Pont whose voices Janequin transposed into polyphony. Modern scholars might feel the provocation differently. For those researchers interested not only in reading about the past, but in understanding how it *sounded*, Janequin's conclusion summarises the problem concisely, for we evidently cannot ask his street singers directly and can only approach their voices through the existing sources.

How might researchers go about understanding past sound worlds, and the sound world of early modern France in particular? One of our main motivating factors in preparing this special number has been the relative absence of works within early modern French studies devoted to the increasingly buoyant discipline of sound studies. Although the pioneering work of R. Murray Schafer,[3] and, for early modern England, that of Bruce R. Smith,[4] date back to the last century, the majority of wider-ranging recent research on sound within pre-modern French studies has tended to focus upon the nineteenth century or the medieval period.[5] A number of individual studies within the early modern period have made use of sonic subjects, such as song, voice and acoustic space,[6] but none of them has extended their enquiry to the more general idea of the soundscape. The appearance in 2018 of a special number of *Paragraph* on *Soundings and Soundscapes*,[7] which includes three articles on

[3] R. Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books, 1994, first published 1979).
[4] B. R. Smith, *The Acoustic World of Early Modern England* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1999).
[5] See, for example, A. Boutin, *City of Noise: Sound and Nineteenth-Century Paris* (Urbana, Chicago, Springfield: University of Illinois Press, 2015), E. Dillon, *The Sense of Sound: Musical Meaning in France, 1260-1330* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), and J.-M. Fritz, *La cloche et la lyre: pour une poétique médiévale du paysage sonore* (Geneva: Droz, 2011). The collection of essays, edited by L. Hablot and L. Vissière, *Les paysages sonores du Moyen Âge à la Renaissance* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2015) is almost entirely devoted to the medieval period, despite its promising title.
[6] See É. Guillorel, *La Complainte et la plainte: chanson, justice, cultures en Bretagne XVI^e^-XVIII^e^ siècles.* (Rennes: Presses Universitaires de Rennes, 2010); S. Nancy, *La Voix féminine et le plaisir de l'écoute en France aux XVII^e^ et XVIII^e^ siècles* (Paris: Classiques Garnier, 2012); X. Bisaro and B. Louvat-Molozay, eds, *Les sons du théâtre Angleterre et France (XVI^e^-XVIII^e^ siècle*); R. Darnton, *Poetry and the Police: communication networks in eighteenth-century Paris* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2010).
[7] S. Kay, F. Noudelmann, eds, *Soundings and Soundscapes, Paragraph* 41 (1), March 2018.

sixteenth- through to eighteenth-century France, together with the innovative Bretez project and website on the sounds of eighteenth-century Paris[8] and the website, 'Seventeenth-Century Parisian Soundscapes',[9] which consists mainly of transcriptions and performances of street songs from the time, are surely indicative of a renewal of interest in early modern sound worlds. It is hoped that the range, both chronological and thematic, of articles in this volume, taken from the fields of history, cultural history, musicology and literary studies, will contribute to this resurgence.

What is a soundscape? For Schafer, a soundscape is 'an acoustic environment' that consists of 'events *heard* not objects *seen*'.[10] Ari Y Kelman has characterised the field of sound studies as concerned with the connected questions of 'what does sound mean' and 'how do we … attend do its meanings?'[11] These definitions pose clear problems for researchers of the early modern period, since sound is inherently ephemeral and cannot be recorded in the archives, editions, or scores that provide our habitual sources. Nevertheless, research in the field of sound studies raises the possibility that early modern written and visual sources might be rethought in order to attend to how they represent sonic events and also how they transmit aural information in themselves. Janequin set his *Cris de Paris* to words that deployed a popular vocabulary which evokes the crowded marketplace and the Petit Pont, but by expressing these terms in musical polyphony he also enabled performers to recreate that sonic event in new settings. If sound studies are about understanding meaning in sound, they cannot recreate an objective soundscape in itself, but they can encounter sound as a subjective and phenomenological experience.

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[8] 'Le Projet Bretez', <https://sites.google.com/site/louisbretez/presentation> [accessed 8 February 2019].
[9] 'Seventeenth-Century Parisian Soundscapes', <https://www.parisiansoundscapes.org> [accessed 8 February 2019].
[10] Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 7-8.
[11] A. Y Kelman, 'Rethiking the Soundscape: A Critical Genealogy of a Key Term in Sound Studies', *Senses and Society*, 5:2 (2010), 213-14.

Research into sound studies involves many disciplines. Literary scholars have studied representations of voice, song, and sound both in canonical and lesser-known texts, reading treatises that represent how writers interpret the operations of the voice and the ear, or the theological and moral significance of the voice in terms of universal harmonies, notably in Marin Mersenne's *Traitez de la voix et des chants* that formed part of his *Harmonie universelle* (1636).[12] These approaches structure the knowledge underlying sound cultures in the terms of elite, scholarly debate, but they tend to focus on the normative rather than the transgressive quality of sound. Literary scholars more interested in the latter issue explore instead how these normative terms were adapted, transformed, and challenged by writers who might consider chatter and noise as much as the harmony of the spheres, an approach exemplified by Mark Darlow's and Nicholas Hammond's contributions to this special number. Literary texts do not merely represent sound, they can serve as prompts for vocal performances whose sonority shapes their meaning, as Hammond demonstrates in his analysis of funeral orations. Approaches to studying sound within literary studies can be almost as diverse as the field of sound studies more broadly conceived.

Historians working on soundscapes tend to select a different source base to literary scholars, but they share similar interests in expanding beyond the literary canon and challenging the norms imposed by different forms of authorities. Criminal archives provide a rich source of recorded speech in this sense. They document the locations and tensions involved in conversation, gossip, and insult, which are fundamental aspects of oral culture and social relations.[13] They are also records of oral exchanges in themselves, accounts of questions and answers in the courtroom structured by legal norms and typically reported in the third person, but individual voices often break through. Criminal archives from the

[12] P.-J. Salazar, *Le culte de la voix au XVII^e siècle: formes esthétiques de la parole à l'âge de l'imprimé* (Paris: Honoré Champion, 1995), 55-66.
[13] A. Farge, *Le goût des archives* (Paris: Éditions du Seuil, 1989), 33-60, 97-136.

Parlement of Toulouse, capital of the *pays d'oc*, are recorded in French but include direct speech in Occitan when it matters to the court as evidence in itself.[14] A revealing example of this procedure is the plea made to the court in 1670 against a group of Protestants in Meyrueis who pillaged the home of the local magistrate Jean d'Olivier. Among the interrogations recorded in the case files, the criminal scribe picked out Jean Malhautard's report of Marguerite d'Olivier's outburst at the window as the Protestants were appearing 'non seulement dans les chambres de ladite maison mais encore sur les toits d'icelle'. Malhautard impressed on the court Marguerite d'Olivier's state of distress when she cried out: '*mon dieus enfonce lou garde robe de mon frere per que fou o que pieyque lous volé vaila les claux*'.[15] Such examples are rare. Tatiana Baranova points out in her article how printed songs can often give a more satisfactory account of early modern sound worlds when criminal courts in sixteenth-century Paris rarely enforced their claims to keep public order, in contrast to the more invasive *mouches* of the *lieutenance de police* in the eighteenth century.[16] And criminal archives can mislead researchers about the realities of early modern life in other ways still. As Éva Guillorel argues in her article, popular songs recorded by folklorists in Brittany often give greater insight than legal records into ordinary people's attitudes towards justice, when criminal archives might be fragmentary or composed in order to justify what was widely perceived as the corrupt self-interest of the magistrates.

The discussion so far has described ideal-type differences between literary and historical research into soundscapes, but literary scholars and historians also share methods and sources in common. A significant approach, exemplified by Mark Darlow's reading of Louis-Sébastien Mercier's *Tableau de Paris* and *Nouveau Paris*, is to challenge the modern

[14] Cf. P. Cohen, 'Torture and Translation in the Multilingual Courtrooms of Early Modern France', *Renaissance Quarterly*, 59:3 (2016), 921-930; Y. Castan, *Honnêteté et relations sociales en Languedoc, 1715-1780* (Paris: Plon, 1974), 16-19.
[15] Archives départementales de la Haute Garonne, 2 B 576, testimony of Jean Malhautard, 18 April 1670.
[16] Cf. Robert Darnton, *Poetry and Police: Communication Networks in Eighteenth-Century Paris* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 7-12, 37-9.

scholars' misleadingly ocularcentric interpretations of early modern culture. Darlow shows how Mercier's representation of Paris is at least as much shaped by his experience of the sounds as the sights of urban life. In terms of sources, many of the contributors to this special number share an interest in song collections, since written songs are explicit documents set for oral performance. These songs can be studied for the content in themselves, as in the polemic of the Catholic League (Baranova) and the Mazarinades (John Romey), satires on high society in the reign Louis XIV (Hammond), or the Breton ballads (Guillorel). Yet, as these articles also note, the same sources can be viewed in the other direction to consider the determining role of the collectors, editors, and folklorists who put them together in the first place in order to shape for posterity a clear sense of their contemporary sound world that is more a literary creation on the page than an aural recording from the streets of Paris or the *veillées* of village life.

Underlying this issue is a tension between the normative and transgressive potential of sound in the early modern period. Soundscapes in this sense are inherently political, raising the problem of who has control over sound and how this varies over time and place. Church bells, public singing, the roar of a crowd all evoke or challenge established religious and political authorities. Prominent studies of sound worlds have explored this issue in recreating the soundscapes of early modern cities, and David van der Linden engages in this field directly by demonstrating how sound not only made claims to political authority in the present but also evoked past struggles, in his case concerning the Wars of Religion in Montpellier. Seventeenth-century Montpellier presented a more constrained, narrow space than Paris – it had no Pont Neuf, for example, whose liberating charge is evoked by Romey and Hammond – but still the potential for sonic conflict in its streets and squares seems far greater than in the Breton villages discussed by Guillorel, where communities closed ranks

internally to sing of good justice in ways that made sense to them and occasionally challenged outside authorities.

These geographical distinctions – between the north and south, Paris and Montpellier, as well as between these cities and rural areas such as Brittany – are one distinguishing feature of this collection of articles that demonstrate a broad range of approaches to early modern French soundscapes. The contributions also cover the chronological range of the period, from the spiritual tensions over sound and royal authority in the Wars of Religion (van der Linden) through to the clamour of public sedition and violence in the Fronde (Romey) and the Revolution (Darlow). In these perspectives, sound is no more inherently political in the Wars of Religion than in the Fronde or the Revolution, yet it is political in different ways depending on the terms of debate, the media of representation, and the sites of conflict. That our authors have approached these issues from the diverse fields of folklore, history, literature, and musicology demonstrates how sound studies is transgressive in another manner too, since it oversteps traditional academic boundaries in ways that provoke subject specialists to rethink their approaches and sharpen their conceptual tools to take account of the irrepressible potential of sound to transform our understanding of the early modern world.

Tom Hamilton is Assistant Professor in Early Modern Social and Cultural History at Durham University. Until recently he was a Research Fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge. He is the author of *Pierre de L'Estoile and His World in the Wars of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017) as well as several articles and chapters on the social and cultural history of early modern France and Europe. His current research explores the role of criminal justice in the legal culture of the ancien régime.

Nicholas Hammond is Professor of Early Modern French Literature and Culture at the University of Cambridge. He is the author and editor of several books and articles on seventeenth-century French theatre, thought, poetry and culture, and is the co-editor of *The Cambridge History of French Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011). His most recent research focuses on the street songs and sonic cultures of early modern Paris, and a book on Parisian sound worlds under Louis XIV is due to be published in 2019 by Penn

State University Press. A co-edited book on Racine's *Andromaque* will appear in 2020 with Brill.